

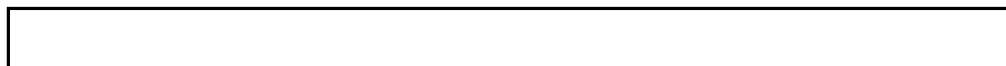
Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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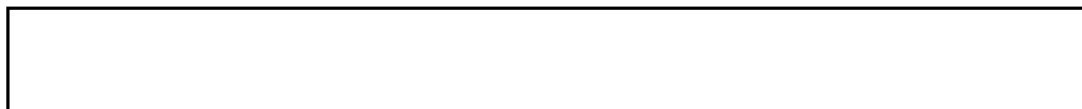
25X1

CONTENTS



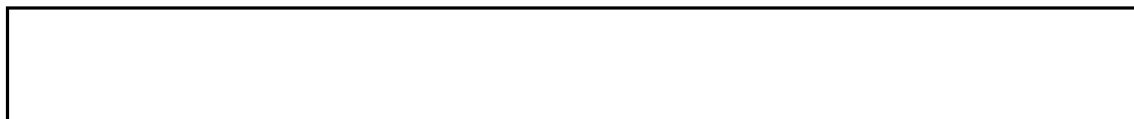
25X6

French Prime Minister Vacates Gaullist Post . 3



25X1

West European Opinion Supports NATO 6



25X1

June 16, 1975

-i-

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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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25X1

French Prime Minister Vacates Gaullist Post

French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac resigned as secretary general of the Gaullist Party at the party's national convention this weekend. By doing so, the Prime Minister removed himself from the day-to-day running of the party and silenced critics who had protested his simultaneous heading of both the government and its major party. He will doubtless continue as leader of the Gaullists in all but name.

Chirac--considered a maverick by old-line Gaullists because he was one of the first to desert the party's candidate in favor of Giscard in the presidential election last year--wrested control of the party away from the Gaullist "barons" last December. At that time, he announced that his takeover was a stop-gap measure until the party's national convention, originally scheduled for February.

The Prime Minister has infused the party with a new dynamism, given it a sense of purpose, and moved it more firmly into support of President Giscard. The Gaullists control the largest block of seats in the National Assembly and are an essential part of Giscard's majority. Chirac's successor as titular head of the party will be selected within 30 days by the Gaullist National Council, the same body that Chirac bent to his will last December.

25X1

June 16, 1975

-3-

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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25X1

West European Opinion Supports NATO

Information officials from the NATO countries concluded at their annual conference last week that popular attitudes toward NATO have recently become less ambiguous and more positive.

The director of NATO's information staff said that polling data from Iceland, Norway, Denmark, West Germany and the Netherlands suggest strong support within those countries for the concept of collective Western security in general and NATO in particular. He also found that public opinion in Luxembourg, Belgium, the UK and Italy supported the alliance, and noted that President Ford and Prime Minister Trudeau had publicly reaffirmed the US and Canada's commitment to NATO.

National representatives confirmed the favorable trend in public opinion and concluded that the recent NATO summit will have a further positive effect on public opinion.

25X1

25X1

June 16, 1975

-6-

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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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